

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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COME-00 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /153 W

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R 060750Z AUG 74

FM AMEMBASSY SANAA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4116

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

USCINCEUR

S E C R E T SANAA 1604

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, YE

SUBJ: CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION IN YAR

KUWAIT PASS MUSCAT, CINCEUR FOR POLAD

1. SUMMARY. HAMDY IN CONTROL AND WORKING HARD. DAILY CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT HAMPERED BY IMPROVISATION AND UNHAPPINESS SOME MINISTERS. HAMDY CONTAINING SINAN ABU LUHUM BUT NOT MOVING AGAINST HIM SOME SHAFAT DISAFFECTION. CIVILIAN EXECUTIVE UNDER HAMDY AND RECONVENING OF CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY EXPECTED IN DECEMBER. EX-PRIMIN HAJRI RETURNING. END SUMMARY.

2. IN LAST MONTH WE HAVE, THROUGH CONVERSATIONS WITH
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KNOWLEDGEABLE DIPLOMATIC AND LOCAL SOURCES, ATTEMPTED TO ASSESS

PROGRESS OF NEW HAMDI REGIME. EVEN FOR YEMEN THERE HAS BEEN PLETHORA OF CONTRADICTIONARY RUMORS. MAJOR QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED HAVE BEEN 1) EXTENT OF HAMDI'S CONTROL OVER ARMY AND GOVT; 2) EXTENT HIS ABILITY CONTROL PRIMIN AYNI AND LATTER'S BROTHER-IN-LAW SINAN ABU LUHUM; AND 3) FORM AND TIMING OF RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE.

3. OUR ASSESSMENT ON FIRST QUESTION, WHICH BRITISH AMBASSADOR HERE SHARES, IS THAT HAMDI IS FIRMLY IN CONTROL. HE HAS INSTALLED OFFICERS LOYAL TO HIM IN KEY UNITS, REPLACING THOSE LOYAL TO FORMER CIC IRYANI AND CHIEF OF STAFF MASWARI. ALTHOUGH ABU LUHUMS CONTROL SOME MILITARY ELEMENTS THEY ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT OR STRATEGICALLY PLACED TO THREATEN HAMDI. ON POLITICAL SIDE, HAMDI'S RIGHT FLANK IS SECURED BY SUPPORT OF SAG AND SHAIKH ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR, YAR'S MOST IMPORTANT TRIBAL FIGURE. ON LEFT FLANK HE HAS APPEALED TO MANY LEFTISTS OR AT LEAST NEUTRALIZED THEM BY INCLUSION IN GOVT OF PRIMIN AYNI AND DEPPRIMIN MAKKI AND BY HIMSELF ASSIDUOUSLY CULTIVATING REFORMIST IMAGE. IN DOING SO, HOWEVER, HE HAS CREATED EXPECTATIONS OF HONEST, ORDERLY GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL NOT BE EASY TO MEET.

4. AT SAME TIME, DESPITE WELL-PUBLICIZED STATEMENTS AND DECREES ON REFORM, THERE IS AIR OF IMPROVISATION IN CONDUCT OF GOVERNMENT. PART OF THIS IS DUE TO FACT THAT REGIME IN OFFICE LESS THAN TWO MONTHS AND HAS DECLARED ITSELF TO BE ONLY TRANSITIONAL. IN LARGE PART, HOWEVER, THIS IS DUE TO FACT THAT AYNI CABINET HAS NO REAL AUTHORITY AND THAT THERE IS NO REGULARIZED PROCESS FOR EFFECTIVE DECISION MAKING BY ACTUAL POLITICAL LEADERS. UP TO NOW DECISIONS SEEM TO BE MADE ALMOST ENTIRELY BY BADLY OVERWORKED CC CHAIRMAN HAMDI WHO MUST TAKE INTO ACCOUNT INTERESTS AND ATTITUDES OF SHAIKH ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR, SINAN ABU LUHUM, OTHER COMMAND COUNCIL MEMBERS (ESPECIALLY MUHAHID ABU SHAWARIB), AND, TO SOME EXTENT, PRIMIN AL-AYNI. HAMDI, DESPITE HIS CONTROL OF SITUATION, IS NOT A DICTATOR AND IS UNLIKELY EVER TO BE ONE, GIVEN DIFFUSION OF POLITICAL POWER IN YEMEN AND COUNTRY'S POST-1967 TRADITION OF CONSENSUS POLITICS.

5. LACK OF ANY REAL AUTHORITY FOR AYNI CABINET, WHILE DESIREABLE POLITICALLY FOR HAMDI, DOES HAVE SOME ILL EFFECTS FOR HAMDI'S
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REGIME. ONE IS ELEMENT OF DISAFFECTION AMONG SHAFI'IS FROM TAIZ AND HODEIDA AREA WHO HAVE LARGE MAJORITY OF POSTS (FOR FIRST TIME) IN PREVIOUS MAKKI GOVERNMENT, BUT WHO NOW SEE THEMSELVES DOMINATED BY HEAVILY ZAYDI COMMAND COUNCIL. THIS IS POTENTIALLY BUT NOT YET ACTUALLY FERTILE AREA FOR SUBVERSIVE ACTION BY PDRY. I WOULD NOT WANT TO OVEREMPHASIZE SHAFI' - ZAYDI SECTARIAN RIVALRY WHICH HAS BEEN ON WANE IN RECENT YEARS, BUT THERE HAS BEEN NOTICEABLE RESURGENCE RECENTLY. ANOTHER ILL-EFFECT

IS UNHAPPINESS OF SOME MINISTERS, PARTICULARLY IN DEVELOPMENT-RELATED FIELDS. WE UNDERSTAND MINFIN JUNAYD WILL BE LEAVING FOR VACATION IN LONDON, FRUSTRATED BY ARBITRARY INCREASES IN MILITARY AND CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT SALARIES AND DIFFICULTY OF GETTING DECISIONS. MINSTATE FOR DEVELOPMENT DR. IRYANI HAS BEEN ABSENT MORE THAN TWO MONTHS. WITHOUT HIM, CPO, WHILE PERFORMING COMPETENTLY, HAS STEADILY BEEN LOSING ITS UMBRELLA AUTHORITY OVER GOVERNMENT MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS. HOPEFULLY DR. IRYANI WILL BE BACK SHORTLY AND CAN DO SOMETHING TO RECTIFY SITUATION.

6. A MAJOR QUESTION YET UNRESOLVED IS CHALLENGE TO HAMDI POSED BY SINAN ABU LUHUM AND HIS EFFORTS PROMOTE AYNI'S POLITICAL FORTUNES. WE HAVE IMPRESSION THAT HAMDI FULLY AWARE OF DANGER POSED BY SINAN'S OVERWEENING AMBITION, BUT DOES NOT WANT TO MOVE ACTIVELY AGAINST HIM FOR TACTICAL REASONS. HAMDI IS, HOWEVER, LIMITING HIS INFLUENCE WITHOUT PROVOKING A CONFRONTATION. HE HAS BLOCKED REPEATED STRONG ATTEMPTS BY SINAN TO REGAIN GOVERNORSHIP OF HODEIDA (BUT HE HAS NOT CLOSED DOOR BY NAMING REPLACEMENT). HE HAS MADE CLEAR THAT AYNI'S MANDATE AS PRIMIN IS ONLY FOR TRANSITIONAL PERIOD, ALTHOUGH POSSIBILITY OF RE-APPOINTMENT EXISTS. MOST RECENTLY HE HAS APPARENTLY ACQUIESCED IN INVITATION TO RETURN CONVEYED TO EX-PRIMIN HAJRI BY SHAIKH ABDALLAH AL-AHMAR (TICKETS WERE MAILED TO HAJRI IN PARIS AUGUST 3). THIS MOVE WILL HELP NEUTRALIZE SINAN BY INTRODUCING UNWAVERING CONSERVATIVE OPPONENT WHO WILL NOT BE SWAYED BY SINAN'S PERSONALITY AS SHAKH ABDALLAH SOMETIMES IS.

7. ON FORM AND TIMING OF RETURN TO CIVILIAN RULE, MINCOMMO ASNAG TOLD ME AUGUST 4 THAT PRESENT CONSULTATIVE ASSEMBLY, NOW "FROZEN", WILL BE RECONVENED IN NOVEMBER WITH SHAIKH ABDALLAH RETURNED AS ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT. TASK OF ASSEMBLY WILL BE TO PREPARE FOR NEW ELECTIONS EARLY IN 1975. AT SAME TIME AS
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ASSEMBLY CONVENES, HAMDI WILL NAME NEW CIVILIAN EXECUTIVE WITH HIMSELF AS PRESIDENT. IT HAS NOT YET BEEN DECIDED WHETHER TO HAVE TWO VICE-PRESIDENTS OR FIVE-MAN "PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL" ALONG LINES OF FORMER REPUBLICAN COUNCIL. ACCORDING ASNAG, VICE-PRESIDENTS WOULD BE EX-PRIMIN HAJIR AND PRESENT TAIZ GOVERNOR ABD AL-RAHMAN UTHMAN, SON OF REPUBLICAN COUNCIL MEMBER ASSASSINATED IN 1973. IF THERE WERE INSTEAD FIVE-MAN COUNCIL, MUHSIN AL-AYNI AND CENTRAL BANK GOVERNOR ABD AL-AZIZ ABD AL-GHANI WOULD BE ADDED TO HAMDI, HAJRI, AND UTHMAN.

8. FIVE-MAN COUNCIL WOULD ESSENTIALLY ACKNOWLEDGE ABU LUHUM PRIMACY IN SHAFI' AREAS SINCE SINAN WOULD HOPE TO CONTROL HODEIDA, AT LEAST FROM AFAR, WHILE REMOVAL OF UTHMAN WOULD LEAVE TAIZ IN UNDISPUTED HANDS OF

MILITARY COMMANDER LTC DIRHAM ABU LUHUM. ABD AL-GHANI AND UTHMAN ARE SHAFAT POLITICQTS NON-ENTITIES WHO COULD NOT OPPOSE ABU LUHUMS AND PROBABLY WOULD BE CONTROLLED BY THEM. (EMBOFF TAIZ HAS ESSENTIALLY SAME REPORT ON FORMATION OF COUNCIL, EXCEPT WITH SINAN INSTEAD OF HAJRI, A ARRANGEMENT EVEN MORE FAVORABLE TO SINAN). VICE-PRESIDENTIAL ARRANGEMENT WOULD ALSO SERVE PURPOSE OF KICKING UTHMAN UPSTAIRS, OUT OF TAIZ, WHERE HE SEEMS TO BE QUITE UNPOPULAR DESPITE FACT HE IS SHAFAT AND DIRHAM ABU LUHUM A ZAYES. HAMD'S OPERATING ASSUMPTION IN THIS SEEMS TO BE THAT VICE-PRESIDENTS OR OTHER PRESIDENTIAL COUNCIL MEMBERS WOULD HAVE NO REAL POWER, AS WAS CASE WITH IRYANI'S REPUBLICAN COUNCIL, AND THAT BY SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT HE COULD COMPENSATE SINAN FOR NOT RETURNING HIM HODEIDA GOVERNORATE WHERE HE COULD AGAIN FLOUT CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITY.

8. DESPITE MANY RUMORS, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THERE ANY IMMEDIATE PROSPECTS FOR RETURN OF HASAN AL-AMRI TO YEMEN. RUMORS SET OFF RECENTLY BY FACT THAT AMRI'S FAMILY WAS IN TAIZ. THEY HAVE RETURNED IN PAST FEW DAYS TO CAIRO. ALTHOUGH EX-PRIMIN HAJRI CAN HELP SUPPORT HAMD'S RIGHT FLANK, WE CANNOT SEE ANY ROLE FOR AMRI EXCEPT AS POTENTIAL RIVAL TO HAMD. WE ASSUME HAMD SEES HIS OLD MENTOR IN SAME LIGHT.

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10. ABOVE SCENARIO SEEMS TO US TO ACCURATELY REFLECT CURRENT STATE OF PLAY. THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE SOME CHANGES CAUSED BY POLITICAL MANEUVERING BETWEEN NOW AND NOVEMBER. NEWTON

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